WITCHES' TALES

PDC

AUGUST
1971
50¢

FEATURING:

THE PULSATING TERROR
OF

THE BLOODY BLOB

•

AN INFERNO OF SHOCK

DARK HORROR

PLUS OTHER
SKIN-CRAWLING TALES
FROM THE
WITCHES'
CAULDRON

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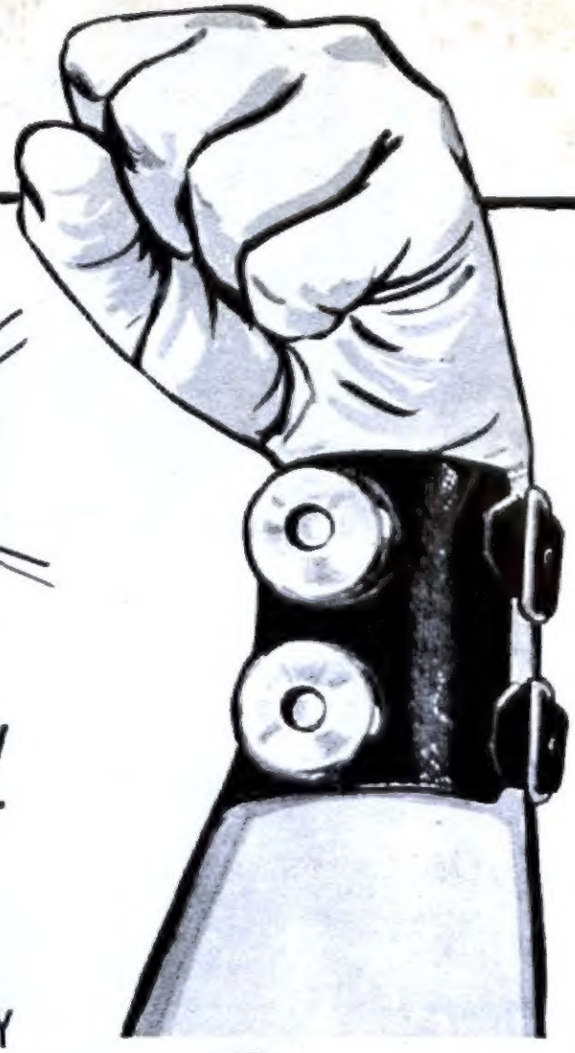

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WITCHES' TALES

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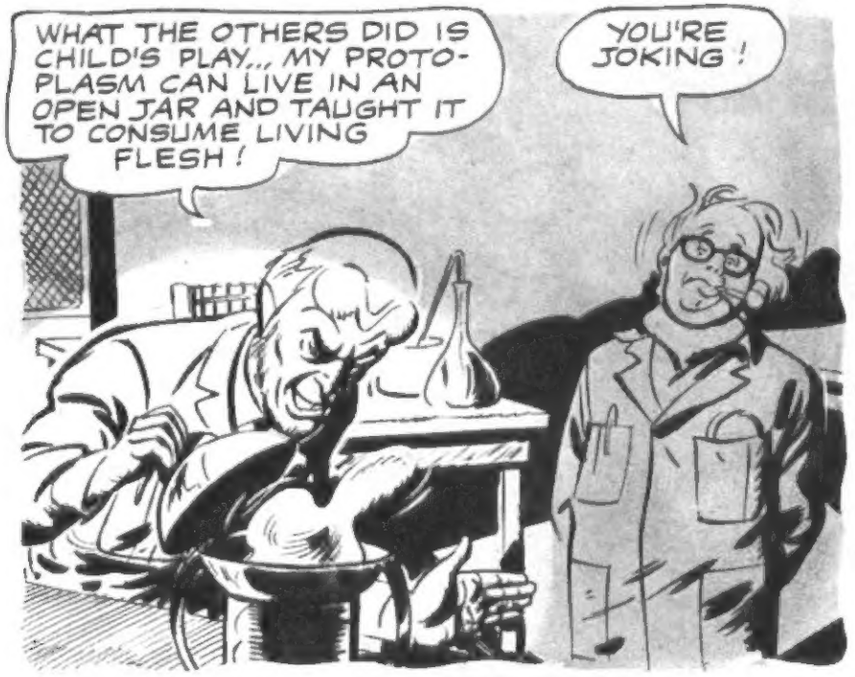
THE BLOODY BLOB

IT'S COMING TOWARD US! IT'S GOING TO *EAT* US *ALIVE!*

TITUS GRIMM AND WILBUR HATCH SHARED THE RAMSHACKLE BUILDING WHERE THEY LIVED AND WORKED... A DANK, CADAVEROUS HOUSE WHOSE EERIE LIGHTS OFTEN SHONE FAR INTO THE NIGHT...

DOCTOR WILBUR HATCH, BIOCHEMIST STARED IN FASCINATION AT THE PULSATING MASS IN THE JAR!


WHAT THE OTHERS DID IS CHILD'S PLAY... MY PROTOPLASM CAN LIVE IN AN OPEN JAR AND TAUGHT IT TO CONSUME LIVING FLESH!
YOU'RE JOKING!

I'VE CONDITIONED THE CELL MASS TO REACT TO THE STIMULUS OF HUNGER! WATCH! I'M GOING TO FEED IT THIS LIVE MOUSE!

SEE? IT SENSES FOOD! IT'S REACHING FOR THE MOUSE!
AMAZING!

WILBUR, I HAD NO IDEA YOUR EXPERIMENTS HAD GONE THIS FAR!
YES, TITUS, I'M ON THE TRACK OF A VERY GREAT DISCOVERY THAT WILL SHOW HOW LIFE STARTED FROM THE PRIMORDIAL PROTOPLASMIC OOZE TO THE LIFE FORMS OF TODAY!

BUT IT MAY TAKE YEARS TO SOLVE ALL THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED! IF ONLY THERE WAS A WAY TO SPEED UP MY EXPERIMENTS!
HUH? WHY NOT GIVE YOUR PROBLEMS TO MY ELECTRONIC CALCULATER?

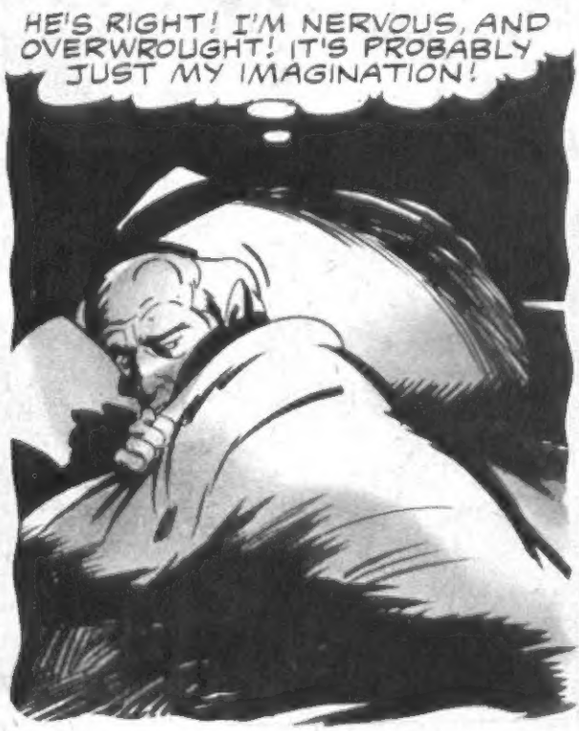
YOU MEAN THAT GLORIFIED ADDING MACHINE?
THAT ADDING MACHINE AS YOU CALL IT IS AN ELECTRONIC BRAIN -- THE MOST REVOLUTIONARY INVENTION OF THE AGE!

...COME ON, TITUS! ...THAT'S OLD HAT!
BAH! MY ANALYZER IS FAR MORE EFFICIENT THAN THE FINEST "BRAIN" IN EXISTENCE! IT EVEN HAS AN ELECTRONIC MEMORY!
WHY WASTE YEARS ON EXPERIMENTS WHEN YOUR PROBLEMS CAN BE SOLVED IN MINUTES!
ALL RIGHT, TITUS! I'LL GET THE FIGURES FOR YOU AND THEN WE'LL SEE HOW GOOD YOUR BRAIN IS!
SHORTLY AFTERWARD, WILBUR WAS STARING WITH WILD INCREDULITY AT THE AMAZING POWERS OF THE ELECTRONIC BRAIN!
INCREDIBLE! ...YET IT CHECKS OUT!
THIS NEW NUTRITIONAL FORMULA SHOULD TRIPLE THE GROWING POWER OF THE MASS AND IMPROVE ITS REACTIONS TO STIMULI!
I'LL LEAVE THE FORMULA ON THE SHELF AND TEST IT THE FIRST THING IN THE MORNING!
THE NEXT MORNING...
MUST HAVE FORGOTTEN TO SWITCH IT OFF LAST NIGHT!
IT SOUNDS LIKE YOUR ELECTRONIC BRAIN, TITUS!
I FORGOT TO THROW OFF THE MEMORY CONTROLS LAST NIGHT!
...THE MACHINE MUST HAVE BEEN WORKING ON MY PROTOPLASMIC PROBLEMS ALL NIGHT!
MMMMMM!

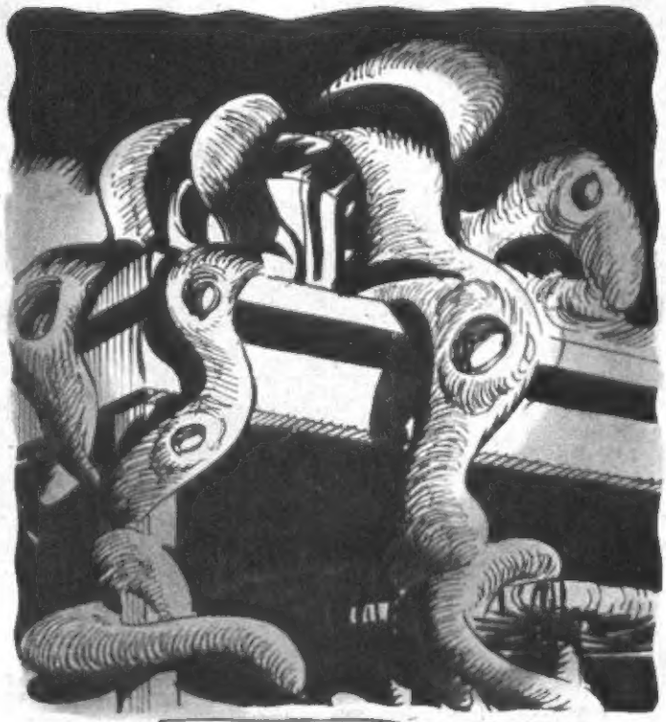
SUDDENLY--THE ICY CHILL OF A PREMONITION OF EVIL SETTLED AT THE SIGHT UPON THE LABORATORY TABLE...

CUTTING AWAY EXCESS GROWTH FROM THE CELL MASS WAS A STANDARD PROCEDURE FOR HIM... BUT THIS TIME AS THE SCALPEL TOUCHED THE BLOB THERE WAS A GRUESOME REACTION!

WILBUR STRUGGLED WITH THE MASS UNTIL HIS TASK WAS COMPLETED!
UNTIL NOW IT ONLY REACTED TO HUNGER! NOW IT REACTS TO FEAR AND DANGER, TOO! THAT NEW NUTRIENT FLUID HAS CHANGED IT SOMEHOW! IT'S AS IF THE CELL MASS CAN THINK AND FEEL!
I DON'T CARE WHAT TITUS SAYS! THAT DEVILISH MACHINE OF HIS HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT!
THAT NIGHT, AS THEY WEARILY LEFT THEIR WORK...
WELL, HATCH... I'VE CUT OFF EVERY SWITCH ON THE BRAIN!
AND TO MAKE DOUBLY SURE, I'VE TIED UP THE CAT!
I'VE MIXED NEW NUTRIENT, BUT I'M KEEPING IT IN THAT VAT IN THE CORNER JUST TO BE SAFE!
BUT THE TENSIONS OF THE DAY KEPT WILBUR HATCH RESTLESS... HE THOUGHT HE KEPT HEARING A HIGH PITCHED WHINE...
THERE IT IS AGAIN... THAT NOISE! THERE'S ONLY ONE THING IT CAN BE!
HUUMM!
TITUS! WAKE UP! YOU MUST'VE FORGOTTEN TO SHUT OFF THE BRAIN!
UH? HUH?
NONSENSE, HATCH! GO TO SLEEP! YOU'RE HEARING THINGS! YOU SAW ME SHUT THE THING OFF!



At THAT MOMENT IN THE ROOM BELOW, THE UNDULATING MASS OF PROTOPLASM WAS SLIDING OUT OF THE JAR, OOZING AND BUBBLING ITS CLAMMY WAY ACROSS THE TABLE TOP AND DOWN TOWARDS THE FLOOR...



THE SICKENING SCREAM OF TERROR RIPPED THROUGH THE HOUSE--THE PITEOUS CRY OF A BEAST IN ITS FINAL MOMENT OF TORMENT!
W-WHAT'S THAT?
THE CAT! SOMETHING'S HAPPENING TO THE CAT! LET'S GET DOWNSTAIRS QUICKLY!
YYOOOOWWRRRR
THEN...
THERE'S NOTHING LEFT OF THE CAT BUT BONES!
LOOK! THAT TRAIL OF SLIME! IT LEADS AWAY FROM THE BONES TOWARD THE CORNER!
IT'S THAT PROTO-PLASMIC MASS! IT MANAGED TO GET OUT OF THE JAR AND INTO THAT VAT OF SPECIAL FEED!
THIS IS AWFUL, TITUS! IT HAS GROWN TO A HUNDRED TIMES ITS FORMER SIZE!
LET'S HAVE A CLOSER LOOK AT IT!
STAY AWAY, TITUS! IT SENSES YOUR APPROACH! IT WILL DESTROY YOU AS IT DID THE CAT!
THAT MACHINE OF YOURS HAS BEEN WORKING ALL NIGHT!
THE BRAIN? HMM! MAYBE WE'D BETTER HAVE A LOOK!
YOU SEE! I TOLD YOU IT'S BEEN WORKING!
YES, AND THAT'S NOT ALL!
IT'S FANTASTIC! SOMEHOW THIS MACHINE HAS MANAGED TO FIND A WAY OF PUTTING ITSELF INTO OPERATION AT WILL!
WHAT?

THERE WAS A GRIM, UNMISTAKABLE NOTE OF CHALLENGE IN THE REMARK, BUT...

BUT TITUS GRIMM HAD FORGOTTEN ONE MACABRE FACT! THE BRAIN WAS ALREADY FAR BEYOND THE CONTROL OF ANY HUMAN BEING!

DON'T TOUCH ME! DON'T-- AAIIIEEE!

AT THAT MOMENT HATCH WAS CLIMBING OUT OF HIS CAR...HE STARED AT THE HOUSE AS HE HE HEARD THE DEATH CRY OF TITUS!
THERE'S TROUBLE INSIDE!
YAGGHHH!

IT'S TITUS! THAT CURSED THING HAS HIM! THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO... THIS BOTTLE OF ACID!

I CAN'T GET CLOSE ENOUGH... BUT MAYBE I CAN MANAGE IT THIS WAY!
SPLASH!

THE SLIMY MASS BEGAN TO DISINTEGRATE BEFORE HATCH'S EYES...
THE BRAIN! HE HAD IT HOOKED UP TO THAT CELL MASS!

FOR ONE MOMENT, THE SICKENING REALIZATION OF GRIMM'S OBSCENE PLAN SWEPT OVER HIM!
HE'S GONE, BUT IT'S BETTER THIS WAY! AT LEAST THE HORROR HE WOULD HAVE RELEASED ON THE WORLD WILL BE FOREVER DESTROYED!

THE END

EJ

DARK HORROR

■ Night had crawled over the city, as a slug over a small fish. In thick layers, she had drowned the evening sounds, until now there was only the silence of darkness and the rain. Night was a mother for her children, protecting them, smoothing them in her black cloak. Soft and tender and terrifying.

The street was empty now, the throbbing of its life-blood ebbed away with the going of its inhabitants. The dim light of a few lanterns created false twilights in the deep portals and corners of the old houses, and gave a wet glitter to the pavement. It changed the downpouring November rain into a silver-threaded spiderweb, with downgliding pearls.

He was an unmoving statue, a part of the darkness and the rain. The wetness seeped ice-fingers through his drenched coat. He waited, with his closed hands protecting the spark of fire in his cupped palms, a half-finished cigarette. He waited, as he had waited ten years ago, and nine years ago, and every night between the seventh and the eighth November. It rained, as it always rained that night, every damned year.

He hated the waiting.

At last the fire burned the palms of his hands, and he threw the rest of the cigarette away, knowing with a sick certainty that it was exactly the same part of a second he had thrown his cigarette away ten years ago, and nine years ago, and seven years ago . . .

A church bell started chiming in the distance, the echoes of its strokes shattering through his ears and brain. Eleven strokes.

Eleven strokes of horror, creating false images in the rain curtain in his brain. Lightning flashed, drawing with an electric pencil a short nightmare vision out of a surrealist painting, the houses as waiting sentinels with dead eyes and hungry mouths, the pavement stones' upturned faces under his feet in unreal light, just before the shadows closed again their eager tentacles around him.

It was like a short awakening from the climax of a nightmare, a moment of petrified time, the exact face of terror unremembered, but the fear running on and on through his veins.

It would be soon now. The waiting was almost finished.

Footfalls. Light steps from high-heeled shoes, sharply ticking sounds like a lonely clock. They came through the curtain of rain and darkness, walking through the still echoeing sound of the church bells, through the empty street. Footsteps where a few seconds before there had been nothing but silence. She must have come from one of the many small side streets, suddenly taking a corner. That was why he heard her approaching so clearly suddenly. Not that it mattered, he'd known they were coming. The footsteps were what he'd been waiting for.

They came nearer, their sounds gliding through the separating layers of rain, now almost beside him. A second bolt of lightning cut the sky, dimmed through the downpour, and he saw her face.

The white pastel face, wetness glittering as sparks on the colorless cheeks, and the half-open, red painted mouth. Water pearls on her black hair, falling in her eyes, a mass of dripping wetness; the classical straight nose with the quick-moving nostrils; the blued eyelids and the far-looking eyes, seeing in a distance which she alone could perceive. She passed by, unconscious of his presence. The lightning had gone, and the rain kept on falling from the open skies. Her high-heeled shoes clattered against the silence, as she went, the darkness closing after her passage.

He started to follow her. He knew the way very well now, every damn corner, as seconds submerged in the eternity of ten years of torture. He lighted a new cigarette, and had to throw it away because it was wet immediately, and crumbled into a brown pulp mass between his fingers.

The light invited him, the only beacon before him in the darkness, changed and slightly pulsat- through the rain fog. He stumbled from the three small steps and then was inside the cafe. Cold dampness welled out of the cellar, but it was still better than the wetness outside. At first there was only the thick blue-gray tobacco-smoke cloud, slowly crawling through the low ceiled room. Then his fearful eyes accustomed to the moving fog, and he started to see. The ceiling was very low indeed, and rested on heavy wooden pillars.

There was a poor-looking bar at the other end, beside it a jukebox, cold and dead with a big,

crudely lettered sign *"Out of Use."*

The left and right sides contained about five wooden tables each, and posters decorated the walls, their colors faded and their corners wrinkled and brown. A few would-be artists bearded, in ragged trousers and heavy pulls, were seated extremely left, the origin of the tobacco fog.

The entering man received a short nod from the barkeeper, who was wrestling with his towel and dusty glasses, as if he was trying to scrub his emptiness off on them.

She was seated at the third table on the right, the same place as before. Oh God, if only *one* small detail would be different this year. But then, it never was, and the nightmare continued, carrying him along, unresisting, while each small detail of the night fitted into the other ones, as a clock's inner wheels. She was just sitting on her chair, with the neutral gray bag in her hand, and the untouched cup of coffee before her on the round table, losing its warmth in steady curls of smoke, slowly crawling up to the ceiling.

He went over to her and sat down in the chair opposite her. There was no sign of recognition from her, she didn't even acknowledge his presence; he was a ghost among the living. He observed her carefully, the patterns of ten years superimposing like paintings on glass plates, placed upon each other. She was pretty and well built, with just the right proportions where they belonged. On her, even the formless raincoat looked like something very feminine.

Her hands were lying across her handbag. She didn't wear gloves, and he saw she had no rings on her fingers. Her hands were long and small, and very white—the hands of a secretary or a typist.

Her eyes were focused on the faded wall posters, but she saw through them, almost as if she studied the cracks and spider webs of the naked wall beyond them. He didn't try to start a conversation; it would be completely useless. She wouldn't react in any way, not even when he would touch her. To her, he didn't exist; he could as well be just another wall poster, to be neglected nad stared through, just like the others whose discolored smiles were grinning down on him. He was just a player in the dark game, a toy without a life of his own.

The proprietor came over to him, and he ordered a glass of cheap red wine. After being paid his fifteen francs, the barman returned to the bar and continued whipping dust from his beer glasses.

The man nipped from his glass, and put it down again. He waited for her to turn, which she did exactly at seventeen minutes past twelve. Slowly she revolved in her chair, and he saw the gliding movements of her hands, as coiled snakes over her well formed legs. Her skirt had crawled up, and he had a short glimpse of the softness of her leg above her stockings. As a statue on a moving showpiece, her profile turned, and the cold gray knowing eyes met his for a split second—a dip into a deep fog, which left him shivering.

At exactly half past twelve, when the chimes sounded, she checked the time on her wrist watch, then stood up and left. The night closed after her, as if she'd never been there.

He called the bartender, and asked him the question he had asked over and over again in those ten years, the question whose answer was engraved with letters of ice in his shrieking mind.

"Do you know the woman who was sittting here with me?"

The bartender looked surprised and suspicious. "Woman? What woman? Excuse me, but you have been sitting here alone for over twenty minutes. All by yourself." He went back to his bar; his hands crawled like two enormous fat white-bellied spiders over the glasses and bottles, and he shot half-angered glances at the man who asked such questions.

The man had known it all the time, and his beating heart was changed into a big freezing room, from which ice water was pumped through his veins. The coldness was all over his stomach. He slowly was preparing himself for hell. He left, too, and the night engulfed him, suspicious, hostile. He had walked that night ten years, had tasted every bitter drop of rain and darkness and fear, and yet still he was an outsider, someone beyond even the laws of darkness.

He followed the street, the sound of his nailed shoes following him . . . tik . . . tik . . . tik . . . tik . . . If he could only stop them; but he couldn't, and the sound went on and on, echoing through his mind. The dead eyes of the houses he passed looked down on him. Go away, they shrieked, go away from us, you

don't belong. Their mouth doors were closed to him, as to all unwanted night creatures. And his feet walked on, carrying him with them, like their own private zombie. How he wanted to stop them. But just as he hadn't stopped them ten years ago, so he couldn't now. Tik, tik, tik, the sounds crawling up the house walls, and falling down on him, burying him, petrifying his brain, like an insect caught in wax, fossilized. His mind didn't react now; it cowered inside his skull, screaming soundlessly, and his body, the frozen flesh and blood machine, went along the empty street, following the girl before him.

Now he had seen her, quickly stepping. When he had approached her to ten meter's distance, he knew that she had heard him. This was where and when she always heard him coming nearer, the hunter closing in on the game. She looked over her shoulder, puzzled, then frightened. She hurried her steps, tik, tik, tik, meaningless echoes in a night for fear. Now five meters, now four, now three, his own steps smothering hers. Two meters, it all went so quick now; she started running, too late, much too late—damn you, why didn't you run earlier when there was still time? Now there's no time left, now, now, not ever! He stretched out his hands across ten years.

He wished he could cry out the horror cupped inside him. If he could only stop this time circle and end the game, but he couldn't, he never could. His feet ran, and his arms went out like striking snakes; his hands very young, and very white, the veins as cords running under his skin, blood pumping through them at the speeded up rhythm of his heart beat. He felt the excitement crawling like an uneasy animal in his belly, beating in his brain, drowning everything else except the horror. Then she turned and opened her mouth to scream, and his hands closed around her throat.

Her mouth stayed open, her teeth flashing as she curled up her lips like a snarling cat. He pushed her against the wall of a house, the light of a nearby lantern spilling over her face, like a faded close-up. He was almost one with her squirming body, feeling every movement of it against his own. She tried to kick, but his legs were between hers and stopped the frantic movements. She made small sounds, krrh, ahrrg, and her nails made bloody patterns on his iron hands. They felt the softness of her throat, the pulsing power of her aorta, as they pressed and pressed; the convulsive movements of her adam's apple; her gasping mouth open to the night and the rain. The excitement was all over his body now, and he felt his legs tremble with red waves pulsing.

Her face grew dark, as her eyes grew wide and the tongue came out of her mouth, dark and swollen between her teeth, lolling out of her gasping mouth. Spittle driped on his hand. Her body made short shaking movements, a small animal running crazy in a trap, slowly dying. Only his brain kept screaming, *stop it, goddamyou stopitstopitstopit*, but it didn't stop. He felt the corners of his mouth draw up, forming the insane grin his face had worn that time, his breath coming in groaning gasps. She suddenly made a last gurgling sound and stiffened, her eyes bulging as those of a frog, her legs making one last convlusive movement.

His hands loosened their grip, and her shawl stayed between his fingers. She stayed upright against the wall, her eyes staring doors into emptiness, her lolling tongue a dark piece of paper put against her blue lips. He leaned against the wall, wishing desperately to be sick, but again he couldn't. Time restarted running, and as he looked, her left eye became fluid and ran across her cheek, leaving a wet slimy trail like a snail's. Her right eye followed, and blood started streaming from the holes, then dried up and left dusty trails. Her body sagged slowly, while the flesh of her face decayed, first the cheeks falling inwards in her mouth, then crumbling into rotting flesh. Yellow bones came splintering through, as the face fell further into ashes, the teeth making small rattling sounds as they clattered upon the street stones. The disintegrating body fell upon its knees, then slowly kneeled backwards, to the sound of cracking bones and tearing rotted flesh and muscles.

Then he turned and began to run through the horror-ridden streets of night, the slightest sound of high-heeled footsteps following him and meeting him from every corner, her dying rattle echoing from every black window. At last, when he couldn't run any more, he fell flat on his face, his hands beating the stones until the blood ran from them and stained his clothes. Then he was very sick, and when his insides stopped turning inside out, and he stopped panting, he looked up at the rain shrouded stars and prayed, "My God, please *PLEASE LET IT BE THE LAST TIME, LET IT BE FINISHED NOW.*" A senseless prayer, because he *knew*.

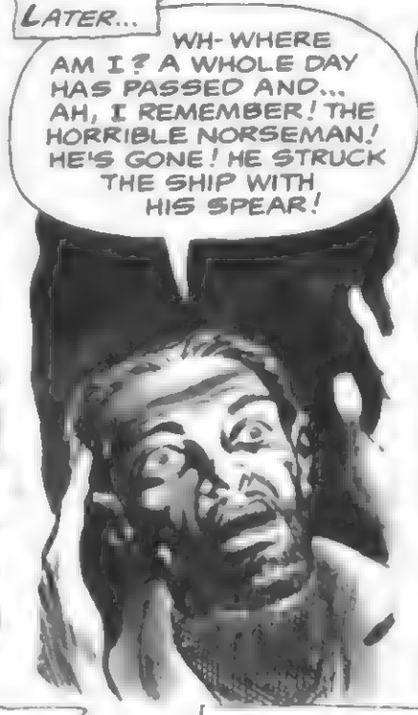
He knew that next year, the night of November seventh, he would again stand in the lonely street, smoking a cigarette in the downpouring rain, tasting the rain and the darkness, waiting for the sound of her high heels. He looked a his hands. They were old and tired, without any strength left; but next year again, they would become the claws of the other, waiting one, deep inside him, while he again would be no more than a watching, tormented machine. He felt the shawl he still held in his hand, and kneaded it into a silken mass in his hot face, the last straw before the opening edge of definite madness, so near and yet never near enough for him. How senseless, his prayer. If there was a God, it was the God from the Old Testament, who wanted an eye for an eye. Because she had not really been there. He knew that as sure, like the fact that the shawl between his clasped fingers would turn into dust, mixing with the mud on his shoes, as soon as he entered over the threshold of his home. ●

SEA GHOST
THE DEVIL'S LOOSE! THEY RISE FROM THE SEA... OUR SHIP WILL SINK! ... THEY MUST BE STOPPED!
AYE... BUT HOW?
FEAR GRIPPED GRUNDAR AS HE WATCHED THE VIKING...
AIEEEE! WHO RISES FROM THE SEA?
I AM TALJ HOLWEG, KING OF THE VIKINGS! WHY DO YOU CURSE YOUR ANCESTORS, YOU FEEBLE DOG?
MY LUCK HAS BEEN ROTTEN, FISHING IN THESE WATERS... IT WAS ANGER WITH MY MISFORTUNES! FORGIVE ME, I DID NOT KNOW WHAT I WAS SAYING!

I WILL DO ANYTHING-- ANYTHING YOU SAY, MIGHTY TALJ!
THEN LISTEN, TONIGHT YOU MUST COME TO THE ISKANDER FJORD! AND BRING A CASK OF WINE AS AN OFFERING!

WHY DO YOU RAISE YOUR SPEAR? NO! DO NOT STRIKE ME!
HAVE NO FEAR, PUNY ONE! THIS BLOW WILL CHANGE YOUR FORTUNES!

BEGONE, AND CURSE US NO MORE!


LATER...
WH- WHERE AM I? A WHOLE DAY HAS PASSED AND... AH, I REMEMBER! THE HORRIBLE NORSEMAN! HE'S GONE! HE STRUCK THE SHIP WITH HIS SPEAR!

AM I LOSING MY SENSES? I NEVER CAUGHT THOSE FISH... IT'S TRUE! TALJ HAS KEPT HIS WORD! MY FORTUNE HAS CHANGED!

AFTER DISPOSING OF HIS CATCH, GUNDAR RUSHED HOME...
GRETA-- INGE-- LOOK WHAT I HAVE! SIX HUNDRED KRONER! THE GREATEST CATCH OF THE SEASON!
GUNDAR! I ALMOST GAVE UP HOPE! BUT HOW DID YOU DO IT!

WHEN GUNDAR RELATED HIS STRANGE, HARROWING EXPERIENCE...
YOUR STORY SOUNDS LIKE THE RAVINGS OF A MAD-MAN! YOU MUST NOT GO TO THE ISKANDER FJORD!
YOU WOMEN! LEAVE ME BE! TONIGHT I GO TO ISKANDER FJORD!

THAT NIGHT, GUNDAR LABORED UP THE PATH TO THE FJORD...
WHY DID I SET OUT ON THIS HELLISH JOURNEY?
I WAS A FOOL TO LISTEN TO A SPECTRE, A GHOST OF MY OWN MIND! I WILL LEAVE THE FORSAKEN PLACE!
SUDDENLY...
AAARRR! THAT BOLT ALMOST STRUCK ME! NOW THERE IS A CAVE IN THAT SOLID ROCK WALL!
GUNDAR ENTERED THE MYSTERIOUS CAVERN...
AAAIII! I-I COME HERE AT KING TALJ'S BIDDING!
OLAF--LET US TAKE THIS WEAKLING TO THE MEADHALL BEFORE OUR KING!
BRING THE DOLT BEFORE ME...AH, HE HAS BROUGHT THE WINE!
WHAT LUCK I'VE BROUGHT YOU, IS NOTHING COMPARED TO WHAT YOU SHALL HAVE! ...HO, LET US DRINK YOUR GOOD FORTUNE!
A TERRIBLE THIRST! I HOPE THE WINE SATISFIES HIM! HOW I WISH I HAD NEVER COME AMONG THESE FIENDISH DEVILS!

YOU SAY I SHALL HAVE ALL THE RICHES I WANT, BUT ONLY UPON ONE CONDITION?

AY, THAT YOU BRING YOUR DAUGHTER INGE TO BE MY QUEEN WHEN SHE COMES OF AGE!

MY DAUGHTER? SURELY YOU JEST, KING TALJ?

I NEVER JEST! LONG HAVE I BEEN WITHOUT A QUEEN--AND INGE IS BEAUTIFUL! YOU WILL BRING HER TO ME!

IT SHALL BE AS I SAID! YOUR DAUGHTER SHALL BE MY QUEEN! BEGONE NOW! OUR MEETING IS CLOSED!

LATER...

OWW... MY HEAD THROBS WITH PAIN! THE CAVE... IT IS GONE! MUST FLEE FROM THIS HAUNT OF HELL'S CREATURES!

WHEN GUNDAR RECOUNTED HIS WILD ADVENTURE AT HOME...

WHAT? YOU DON'T BELIEVE A WORD I'VE SAID?

YOU SMELL OF WINE! YOU MUST HAVE BEEN AT A DRUNKEN REVEL!

FROM THAT DAY, GUNDAR'S LUCK HAD CHANGED..

HERE COMES GUNDAR WITH HIS BOAT LOADED! IT IS A MIRACLE!

OR THE WORK OF THE DEVIL! MOST OF US HAVE HAD NO CATCH FOR A WHOLE WEEK, AND HE COMES HOME EVERY DAY LIKE THAT! GUNDAR GROWS RICH!

MONTHS PASSED, AND SOON GUNDAR BECAME THE MASTER OF A LARGE FISHING FLEET...

SO YOU ADMIRE MY FLEET, LARS?

YES, GUNDAR, BUT I ADMIRE YOUR DAUGHTER INGE EVEN MORE! SHE HAS COME OF AGE, AND I WOULD LIKE TO MARRY HER!

WHAT IS THE MATTER, GUNDAR?
YOU SAY INGE HAS COME OF AGE? I-I FORGOT!

AS THE FLEET DRIFTED TO THE ISKANDER FJORD...
AAAIII! KING TALJ! WH-WHAT DO YOU WANT?
DID YOU THINK I WOULD FORGET, GUNDAR? YOU HAVE NOT BROUGHT INGE TO BE MY QUEEN!

I CANNOT DO IT! YOUR REQUEST IS MAD!
BAH! WE SHALL SEE WHAT FORTUNE YOU HAVE NOW, AFTER I CAST MY SPEAR!

THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF YOUR DOWNFALL, GUNDAR... UNLESS YOU KEEP YOUR PROMISE!
NO! AAAARGH!

MY SHIP! THE BEST OF ALL MY FLEET, SINKING!
YOU MUST HAVE STRUCK A HIDDEN REEF! HO, ALL HANDS ABANDON SHIP!

ONE OF THE FLEET RESCUED THE MEN...
TURN THE SCOOP AROUND AND HEAD FOR HOME! FROM NOW ON LARS WILL BE CAPTAIN OF THE FLEET!

GUNDAR DECIDED NEVER TO SAIL TO THE BANKS AGAIN...
...AND YOUR FATHER HAS GIVEN ME COMMAND OF THE FLEET, INGE! DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS?
OH, YES, LARS! WE CAN BE MARRIED!

THE NEXT DAY, UNDER LARS' COMMAND, THE FLEET ENCOUNTERED A VIOLENT STORM...
NEVER SEEN SUCH A STORM IN ALL MY YEARS!
WE SHOULD TURN BACK!
SUDDENLY, FROM OUT OF THE SEA MIST...
THERE LIES GUNDAR'S CURSED FLEET! ONWARD, MY VIKINGS! STRIKE THEM DOWN AND SEND THEM TO THE BOTTOM! ONWARD!
THE VIKING GALLEYS CLASHED WITH THE FISHING FLEET...
AAAIII! OUR SHIPS ARE THROWN TOGETHER LIKE MATCH BOXES AND SUNK, AND WE CAN DO NOTHING! HAAR! WE ARE STRUCK!
LET THOSE FEW ESCAPE! I WANT GUNDAR TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED! HE MUST LEARN HE CANNOT BREAK AN OATH TO KING TALJ!
AS THE FEW BATTERED SURVIVORS REACHED THE DOCK...
YOU MEAN THE WHOLE FLEET IS LOST? YOU DOG! NEVER SHOW YOU FACE AT MY HOUSE AGAIN!
BUT I TELL YOU IT WAS THE WORK OF DEMONS!
LARS, FATHER WILL NEVER CONSENT TO OUR MARRIAGE NOW!
WE WILL ELOPE TO TONIGHT!

FOR HOURS, GUNDAR WRESTLED WITH HIS CONSCIENCE...
I HAVE DECIDED! I CANNOT LIVE IN POVERTY AGAIN! KING TALJ SHALL HAVE INGE! SHE SHALL BE A GREAT QUEEN!
INGE! COME HERE AT ONCE!
AS GUNDAR ENTERED THE HOUSE...
OH, GUNDAR-- INGE IS GONE! THE NOTE SAYS SHE ELOPED WITH LARS! WHAT SHALL WE DO?
AAAII! I AM UNDONE! ALL IS LOST NOW!
A FEW DAYS LATER, GUNDAR TRIED ONE LAST DESPERATE APPEAR...
KING TALJ! IF YOU HEAR ME, LISTEN TO MY PLEA!
SUDDENLY, GUNDAR'S CALL WAS ANSWERED...
GREAT KING! INGE IS GONE! LOST TO ME FOREVER! HAVE MERCY! DO NOT CONDEMN ME TO MY OLD LIFE AGAIN!
FOR YOU THE END HAS COME!
MERCY! NO! AAARRGH!
THE NEXT DAY, WHEN A SEARCH PARTY FOUND GUNDAR...
WHO KNOWS WHAT EVIL DEALINGS GUNDAR HAD! WHAT A WAY TO DIE!
THAT SPEAR IS A THOUSAND YEARS OLD! AND THE HAND WHICH THREW IT? IT COULD ONLY BE THE OLD NORSEMEN!
SUDDENLY, AS THE THUNDER ROLLED ACROSS FROM THE ISKANDER FJORD...
LOOK! GUNDAR HAS JUST SUNK WITH HIS SHIP!
AAIII! THE ANCIENT DEVILS HAVE CLAIMED ANOTHER VICTIM! LET US LEAVE THIS ACCURSED SPOT AT ONCE!
BROOM
The End

THE DEVIL'S SWORD

EACH YEAR, IN THE CENTRAL AMERICAN BULL-FIGHT TOWN OF METAXOS, NESTLED AT THE FOOT OF MT. POCO, STRANGE CEREMONIAL RITES WERE HELD ON THE EVE BEFORE THE TOURNAMENT! THE WEIRD CEREMONY WAS CLIMAXED BY THE MATADOR OF THE PRECEDING YEAR PLUNGING THE FLAMING SWORD OF MIRACLES INTO THE HEART OF THE DEVIL BULL ... ACCORDING TO THE LEGEND OF THE TOWN, THESE RITES WERE TO PROTECT THE TOWN FROM TERRIBLE DESTRUCTION BY THE ERUPTION OF MT. POCO FOR ANOTHER YEAR!

WITH THIS MIRACLE SWORD, ORIGINALLY OWNED BY A SPANISH KNIGHT CENTURIES AGO, I NOW PERFORM THE FINALE!

VIVA THE SWORD OF MIRACLES!

VIVA JUAN PEREZ, THE WORLD'S GREATEST MATADOR!

GRANDMA, THEY MUST DIP THE GREAT SWORD IN OIL, FIRST, TO MAKE IT BURN!

SILENCE, BOY! IF THE SWORD REMAINS IN THE HEART OF THE DEVIL BULL FOR 24 HOURS, SATAN WILL BE HARMLESS FOR A FULL YEAR!

ANOTHER MATADOR, MIGUEL CALVADOS, WATCHED THE FANTASTIC ANTICS WITH GRIM AMUSEMENT...

WHAT SUPERSTICIOUS NONSENSE! SUCH A FUSS OVER PEREZ AND THAT SILLY SWORD! ANYONE KNOWS THERE IS NO SUCH PERSON AS THE DEVIL!

DO NOT BE SO CERTAIN THERE IS NO SATAN, MIGUEL CALVADOS!
HOW THE DEVIL DID YOU GET IN HERE? MY DOOR IS LOCKED! I DID NOT ORDER WINE!
HEH! HEH! PERHAPS YOU HAVE ANSWERED YOUR OWN QUESTION, MIGUEL!
TAKE THE WINE BACK!
IT IS A GIFT OF THE MANAGEMENT TO YOU WHO WILL BE THE NEW CHAMPION...THE MASTER MATADOR AFTER TOMORROW'S TOURNAMENTS IN THE BULL RING! AND YOU WILL REPLACE THE MIGHTY JUAN PEREZ! IT IS DESTINED!
RIDICULOUS! I HAVEN'T A CHANCE OF BEATING PEREZ! HE IS AT THE PEAK OF HIS SKILL! ALTHOUGH, I'D DO ANYTHING TO BECOME THE CHAMPION TOMORROW BY DEFEATING PEREZ!
ANYTHING, SENOR? DO EXACTLY TWO THINGS...AND WHAT YOU DESIRE WILL BE ARRANGED!
FIRST, YOU MUST REMOVE THE SWORD OF MIRACLES FROM THE HEART OF THE DEVIL BULL! SECONDLY TAKE THE SWORD TO THE CAVE OF DEMONS, IN THE CLIFFS OF MT. POCO!
I-I DO NOT UNDERSTAND!
OBEY MY INSTRUCTIONS, AND TOMORROW YOU WILL BECOME THE MASTER MATADOR!
HE... HE'S DISAPPEARING RIGHT THROUGH THE DOOR! IT-IT MUST BE MY EYES! I'M SEEING THINGS!
INSTANTLY, MIGUEL CALLED THE HOTEL DESK, AND...
YOU HAVE NO WAITER ANSWERING THAT DESCRIPTION? YOU SENT NO ONE UP HERE WITH A BOTTLE OF WINE? YOU'RE POSITIVE? OH-- YES...I SEE...

WELL, THE WINE IS HERE... I MIGHT AS WELL TAKE A SWALLOW! I'VE BECOME SO HIGH-STRUNG... I IMAGINED THAT CRAZY-TALKING WAITER WALKED RIGHT THROUGH THE DOOR!
WINE... MADE ME... DIZZY! FEEL STRANGE... NO HARM IN FOLLOWING HIS INSTRUCTIONS AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS!
MIGUEL WAITED UNTIL THE LAST STRAGGLERS LEFT THE TOWN SQUARE, THEN...
I-I FEEL WEAK... TORN BETWEEN THE DESIRE TO FOLLOW MY INSTRUCTIONS AND THE URGE NOT TO MEDDLE WITH THE MIRACLE SWORD! BUT... THERE IT IS... DONE NOW!
NOW TO THE CAVE OF DEMONS! DO I IMAGINE IT OR DOES THE VOLCANO REALLY SEEM TO SMOKE AND BURN MORE BRIGHTLY TONIGHT?
UGH! THOSE LIMESTONE FORMATIONS DO LOOK LIKE DEMONS... I-I'LL JUST LEAVE THE SWORD HERE AND VAMOOSE!
LIGHTNING STREAKING THROUGH THE CAVE STRUCK THE STONE DEMONS! THEY-THEY'VE MOVED! THEY SEEM TO BE ALIVE!
THEY ARE ALIVE! THEY'VE GOT ME! I-I CAN'T GET AWAY! HELP! HELP!
IT'S NO USE, MIGUEL! STOP STRUGGLING! YOU'VE MADE A BARGAIN AND MUST KEEP IT!

FULFILL YOUR MISSION HERE, AND YOU WILL NOT BE HARMED! PICK UP THE SWORD OF MIRACLES! WE WHO ARE EVIL DARE NOT TOUCH IT!
WHA-- WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?
TERROR-STRICKEN, MIGUEL DID AS THE DEMONS DEMANDED, THEN WAS LED ALONG A TUNNEL TO THE EDGE OF A FIERY PIT...
FLING THAT CURSED SWORD OF MIRACLES INTO THE FLAMES OF HADES... QUICKLY!
YES! ANYTHING YOU S-SAY!
... WHAT IN-- SATAN...
YES! YOUR ACT RELEASES ME FROM MY FIERY PRISON! TOMORROW YOU WILL REAP YOUR PROMISED REWARD!
THIS CHOKING, BLINDING HEAT! CAN'T STAND IT! GETTING WEAK! BLACKING OUT...
WHEN HE LOSES CONSCIOUSNESS, REMOVE HIM!
LATER..
BACK IN MY ROOM! THAT WINE DOPED! I-- I JUST DREAMED ALL THAT ABOUT THE CAVE OF DEMONS! THAT MUST BE THE EXPLANATION!
THE NEXT DAY...
WOE TO US ALL! SOMEONE HAS REMOVED THE SWORD OF MIRACLES FROM THE DEVIL BULL!
THAT ALSO MEANS DEATH IN THE RING TODAY FOR JUAN PEREZ! SO SAYS THE LEGEND!
I-I DID STEAL THE SWORD! THAT PART WAS NO DREAM! BUT THE REST OF IT COULDN'T BE TRUE! NOTHING WILL HAPPEN TO THE TOWN, NOR TO PEREZ! THAT'S RIDICULOUS!

BUT THAT AFTERNOON, MIGUEL'S SCOFFING AT THE TOWN LEGEND TURNED TO FEARFUL TRIUMPH...
JUAN PEREZ FATALLY GORED! SATAN KEPT HIS PROMISE! THE GRISLY EXCHANGE IS COMPLETED!

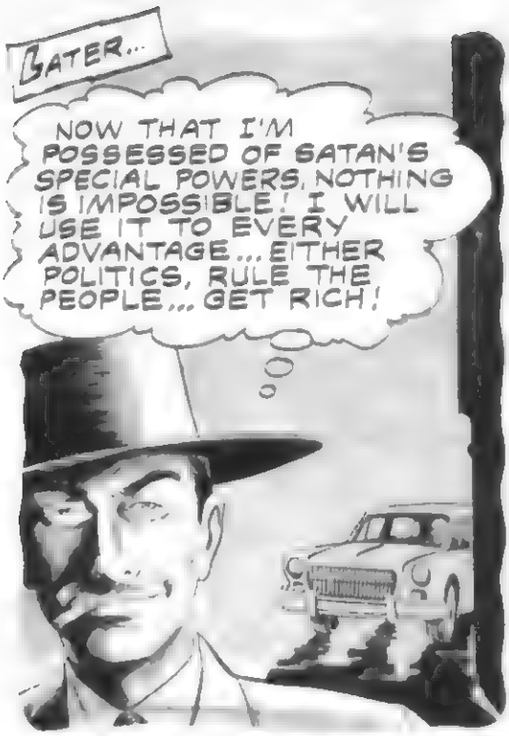
NOW IS MY CHANCE! IF I CAN KILL THE BULL THEY'LL HAVE TO MAKE ME THE MASTER MATADOR!
RUN! NEVER HAVE I SEEN SUCH A HUGE AND VICIOUS BEAST!

AN IMAGE? APPEARING ON THE UNDER SIDE OF MY CAPE!
DO NOT BE AFRAID! I'VE GIVEN YOU PART OF MY SATANIC POWER SO THAT YOU MAY KILL THIS BEAST AND BE PROCLAIMED THE CHAMPION AS AGREED!

FINALLY WITH THE PRECISION OF A MACHINE, MIGUEL SINKS THE BLADE HOME...
VIVA MIGUEL, THE NEW CHAMPION!
LISTEN TO THEM! I'M FAMOUS, A HERO! A NATIONAL FIGURE! THEY WORSHIP ME! THIS WAS WORTH A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL!

NOW, PERHAPS THE BEAUTIFUL SEÑORITA VALLES WILL NO LONGER CALL ME CONCEITED, SELFISH, OVER-AMBITIOUS FOOL!
THE GREAT MIGUEL COMES TO YOU, SEÑORITA! HOW CAN YOU RESIST HIM NOW!

MIGUEL, YOU'VE CHANGED! YOU SEEM TO POSSESS A STRANGE, NEW POWER! AND THERE IS A WEIRD, DEVILISH LOOK IN YOUR EYES I CANNOT RESIST!
IT MUST BE THE SATANIC POWER GIVEN TO ME!


LATER...
NOW THAT I'M POSSESSED OF SATAN'S SPECIAL POWERS, NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE! I WILL USE IT TO EVERY ADVANTAGE... EITHER POLITICS, RULE THE PEOPLE... GET RICH!

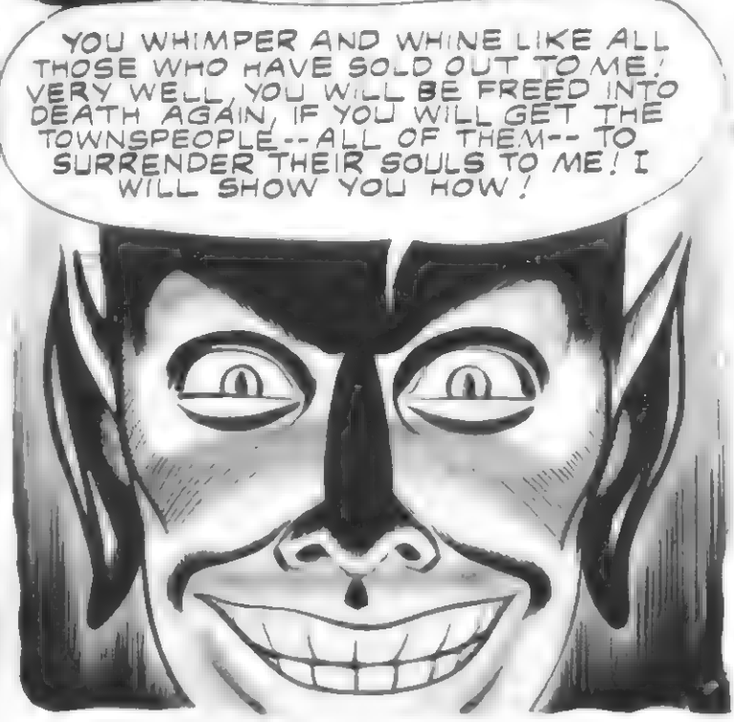
NO! I AGREED ONLY TO LET YOU BECOME MASTER MATADOR! YOU MUST NOT FORCE THE SENORITA TO LOVE YOU! AND FORGET YOUR POLITICAL AMBITIONS!
HA! YOU CANNOT COMMAND ME! I'M NOW AS MIGHTY AS YOU, EVIL ONE!

ONCE A MORTAL IS GIVEN SATAN'S POWER, IT CANNOT BE TAKEN AWAY AGAIN-- EXCEPT IN DEATH! YOU WILL PAY FOR REBELLING AGAINST ME!
EEYAHHRR!
THUD

AS THE CORPSE OF MIGUEL LAY IN STATE, HIS PUBLIC PASSED TO PAY THEIR LAST RESPECTS...
HE'S RISING FROM THE CASKET!
DON'T BE FRIGHTENED! I'M NO LONGER DEAD! A MIRACLE HAS HAPPENED!

YES... THE MIRACLE OF EVIL, MIGUEL! YOU HAVE A NEW LIFE, BUT ONLY SO THAT YOU MAY SERVE ME!
LOOK! THE EVIL ONE HAS CLAIMED HIS SOUL! MIGUEL IS NOW ONE OF THE DEVIL'S MINIONS!

HE'S TALKING TO SOMEONE-- SOMETHING THAT WE CANNOT SEE! FLEE WHILE THERE IS STILL TIME
PLEASE--I CANNOT REMAIN IN THIS STATE AND FACE THE LOATHING OF MY PEOPLE! RELEASE ME!


YOU WHIMPER AND WHINE LIKE ALL THOSE WHO HAVE SOLD OUT TO ME! VERY WELL, YOU WILL BE FREED INTO DEATH AGAIN, IF YOU WILL GET THE TOWNSPEOPLE--ALL OF THEM-- TO SURRENDER THEIR SOULS TO ME! I WILL SHOW YOU HOW!

AT THAT MOMENT, OUTSIDE...
THE LEGEND WAS TRUE! WITH THE THEFT OF THE SWORD OF MIRACLES MT. POCO HAS ERUPTED!
WE ARE DOOMED TO DIE UNDER A RIVER OF BURNING LAVA!
WAIT! YOU CANNOT ESCAPE! SATAN HAS UNLEASHED HIS FURY UPON YOU! IF YOU'LL SELL HIM YOUR SOULS--ALL OF YOU-- I'LL TURN ASIDE THE WALL OF LAVA AND SAVE YOU!
PROVE YOUR POWER!
PRODUCT OF THE FIRES OF HADES, OBEY ME, A MINION OF SATAN! STOP YOUR DESTRUCTIVE FLOW! PROVE TO THESE HUMANS THE POWER OF HIS SATANIC MAJESTY!
THE BLAZING RIVER STOPPED! THE TOWNSFOLK WERE AWED BY THE FEAT, WHEN SUDDENLY...
ARRRRGGHH! THE SWORD OF MIRACLES! ITS POWER FOR GOOD WAS STRONGER THAN THE FLAMES OF EVIL! I-I'M DYING! EEYAAAH!
THE MIRACLE SWORD HAS RETURNED TO THE TOWN AND KILLED MY MIGUEL! I'M BEING RETURNED TO THE DARK DEPTHS OF THE EARTH!
WE ARE SAVED! THE SWORD OF MIRACLES HAS DONE ALL THIS! IT IS INDEED ENDOWED WITH THE POWER OF GOOD!
THE NEXT DAY...
POOR MIGUEL! IN THIS FINAL DEATH, HE AT LEAST REGAINED HIS OWN APPEARANCE, EVEN THOUGH HE'S BEING BURIED IN SINNER'S FIELD, ALONE... IN DISGRACE!
IT IS ONLY JUST!
THE END

EZRA

"ABDUCTOR MINIMI DIGIT"

■ Charles Deane's death occurred so many years ago that I feel that it is now safe to publish what I know about it.

As it happens, I was a member of the coroner's jury that sat on the case, the jury that decided, for the sake of the peace of mind of Deane's widow, to suppress Deane's diary, which was among the evidence collected by the coroner. That diary has remained in my possession ever since: and, now that Mrs. Deane has died too, I feel that there can be no harm in giving certain extracts from it to the public.

All matters of an intimate or personal nature will be omitted; in fact, everything except that which throws some light on the causes of Charles Deane's death.

The diary follows:

Sept. 3. To Doctor Foster today, for him to look at my sore throat. While waiting my turn in the anteroom, I studied an anatomical chart on the wall. Such charts always fascinate me. It was one of those colored charts, which show the way a person would look if his skin could be painlessly removed. All sorts of funny names tacked onto parts of the body, parts which I never suspected existed. The longest and most high-sounding names tacked onto the smallest and least important parts. For example, a tiny muscle and tendon running along the outside edge of the foot was called "Abductor Minimi Digit." Fancy that!

Doctor Foster happened to step out into the anteroom, and saw me looking at the chart.

"Interested?" he asked, with an amused smile on his lips.

"Yes," I replied. Then, "Say, Doc, what's that funny little muscle with the long name?"

"The abductor minimi digit? There should be an 'i' on the end of it, but it's usually abbreviated the way it's given on the chart. Translate its name into English, and you have: 'the puller-away of the littlest digit.' A more modern name for it is 'abductor digiti quinti,' meaning 'the puller-away of the fifth digit.' It's to move the little toe out sidewise from the others."

"But nobody can do that!" I laughed, trying to do it inside my shoe.

"Some can, and some can't," said he, "but the muscle is there, in all of us."

Then he led me into his office, and looked at my throat, which is what I had come for.

Sept. 4. Last night, as I was undressing to go to bed, I got to wondering about that little thread of red muscle which is supposed to lie along the outside edge of my foot. "Abductor minimi digit" it is called

I tried to wiggle my little toe with it, but the toe never budged. I might just as well have tried to wiggle one of the handles on one of the bureau drawers by just looking at it. My toe seemed strangely not a part of me, like the drawer-handles.

Got to thinking about that alleged toe-muscle. Made up my mind to try it for a few minutes every evening. Try to wiggle that blame toe!

Sept. 5. Last night, I tried to wiggle my little toe. My *right* little toe, to be more specific. I watched that toe, fascinated. Put every bit of my will-power into the effort to move it. Made passes at it with my hands, as though to hypnotize it. But it stared back at me, and stubbornly refused to move.

Sept. 20. Every night, for over two weeks I have practiced on that abductor minimi digit muscle, but still my toe refuses to move. However, I believe that I am gaining on it, for the toe now feels as though it were coming under my control. I can sense some psychic connection between that toe and my nerve system; I can sense the little thread of red muscle. And I can *almost* make that toe respond to my will.

Sept. 21. Last night, just the faintest flicker of that toe. It's mine! I control it! My abductor minimi digit has become a thing of reality. Now, if the toe will only move!

Sept. 23. Last night the toe moved again, several times. This is a silly pursuit of mine, giving so much time and attention to the development of a perfectly useless muscle, a muscle which has atrophied through long generations of disuse. And yet there is considerable of a thrill to feel that you have control over something which formerly was hardly a part of you. No one who hasn't tried it can ever realize what a satisfaction there is to adding a new muscle to one's repertory.

Oct. 1. The toe-exercises have progressed. My right abductor minimi digit is developing, strengthening. I can now move my little toe smartly away from the others at will, just as easily as I can spread apart the fingers of either hand.

Last night, after putting my right little toe through his paces, I tried it on my left. But he never budged. I wonder if I have any abductor minimi digit in my left foot. My left little toe seems not to be a part of me. I must reach out and annex some more of the universe.

Oct. 15. Last night I was able to move my *left* little toe. This is a most intriguing game!

Oct. 20. This evening I am seated in my study. I have taken off both shoes, and have been putting my two trained toes through their paces. They both function perfectly. Both are under complete control.

And now, like Alexander, I am looking for new worlds to conquer, but unfortuantely I don't know the names of any more freak muscles. I must go down to Doctor Foster's tomorrow and look up some more names on his anatomical chart.

No! I have a better idea. It has suddenly come to me. The paperweight there on the desk. I will try and move *it*. True, it is not a part of me, like my toes; and yet, less than two months ago, my toes seemed just as far from being a part of me, just as remote from any possibility of control by my will, as that paperweight does now.

Why not look hard at that paperweight, and force it to move, by the sheer power of my will? Absurd? Of course, it's absurd! But it seemed equally absurd with respect to my toes, and yet I finally made *them* move. So I shall try it with the paperweight.

Oct. 21. It is evening again. I am in my study. I can wiggle my toes, but not the paperweight. But I can try! I shall concentrate my will on the paperweight, and see what happens. not the paperweight. But at least I can try! I shall concentrate my will on the paperweight, and see what happens.

Oct. 26. For a week, every evening, I have tried to move that paperweight by just looking at it and straining my will-power toward it; yet still it sits motionless upon the desk.

However, I believe that I am gaining on it, for I can almost feel the paperweight coming under my control. I can sense some psychic connection between that paperweight and my nerve system, though there is no little thread of red muscle, no abductor minimi digit here.

Oct. 27. I can *almost* make that paperweight respond to my will! I am elated!

Oct. 28. Aha! Just now I saw just the faintest flicker of that paperweight! Or did I imagine it? Perhaps it was merely the reflection of the firelight.

Oct. 29. I could hardly wait for evening to come. Now it is here, and I am alone in the study, with my toes and that paperweight. That accursed paperweight!

The paperweight seems to be becoming a part of me. Or perhaps I am becoming a part of it. Anyhow, it obsesses me. I *must* make it move. I must!

How hot it is in here! I take off my coat. The blood pounds at my temples! Let me be calm. I am on the verge of a great discovery, a great accomplishment; and such an occasion demands calmness.

Careful now. Let me put all my calm sane effort into moving that paperweight.

I pause exhausted, but I think it did move—just the slightest shudder. I must rest, and try again.

Now I am calm. Calmer than ever before in my whole life. And with that calmness, there comes a realization of what I am trying to do. If my will-power can move that paperweight, the accomplishment will represent the beginning of the triumph of mind over matter. To what heights of destiny may I not then aspire?

Thoroughly rested now, I am. I stare across the desk at that paperweight. Once it obsessed me, but now I am its master. All that I have to do is stretch out my will, and it will move for me. I am sure of this. I can take my time now and set down these thoughts on the eve of my great triumph. For I *know* that I can move that paperweight whenever I wish.

My personality seems to stand aloof, and look down on the whole scene: Charles Deane, Esquire, sitting at his desk, calm, serene, supreme, the first man in the world to be able to move an inanimate object by mere will-power, without touching it.

And yet, in that aloof spectatorship, I cannot help realizing that such things are not done. That they are contrary to the natural order, which God has ordained.

I am afraid! But it is too late to stop now. Oh, the fascinating horror of being able to move that paperweight!

Enough of this scribbling. I must put my power to the test, although I know that if that accursed weight actually moves, I shall go stark, staring insane.

Well, here goes.

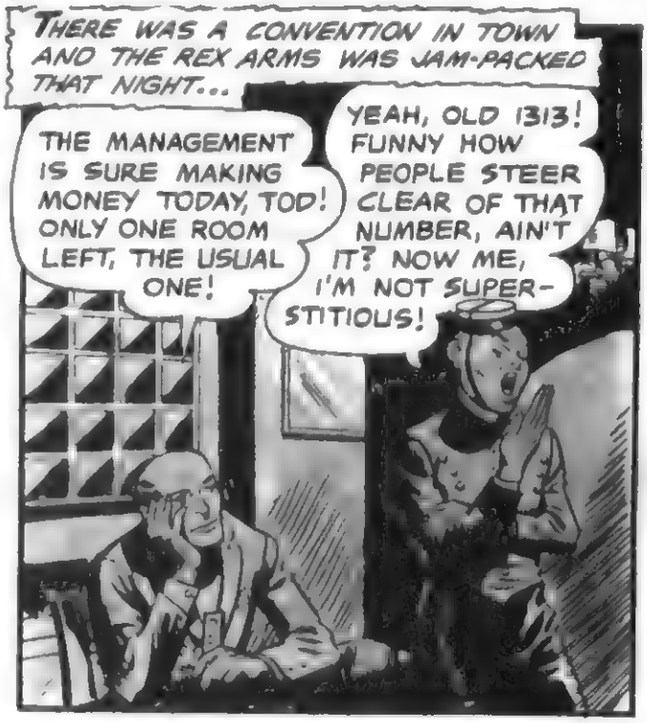
These were the last words of Charles Deane's diary. He was found dead at his desk, a look of horror on his face, his pen and diary lying in front of him, and one hand reached forward and grasping a heavy carved paperweight. ●

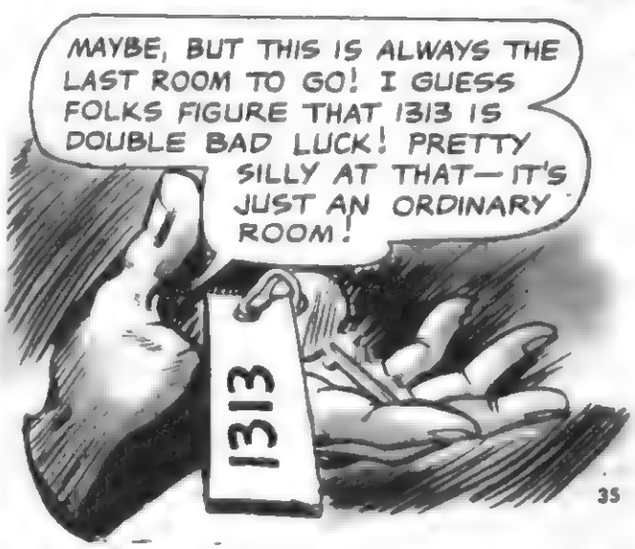
MOST HOTELS ARE DREARY THINGS, COLD AND IMPERSONAL, WHERE PEOPLE SPEND A NIGHT OR TWO AND THEN PASS ON NEVER TO RETURN! BUT THE ROOM IN THE REX ARMS WAS DIFFERENT — THERE WAS EVIL LURKING THERE, A NAMELESS AND BALEFUL HORROR THAT COULD SEND INNOCENT PEOPLE SCREAMING TO A MESSY DEATH ON THE PAVEMENT FAR BELOW! WHAT WAS THE DREADFUL SECRET OF ROOM 1313?

HORROR Comes to ROOM 1313

HA-HA-HA-HA-HO-HO — HEE-HEEEEE!

YAAAAAAAA!



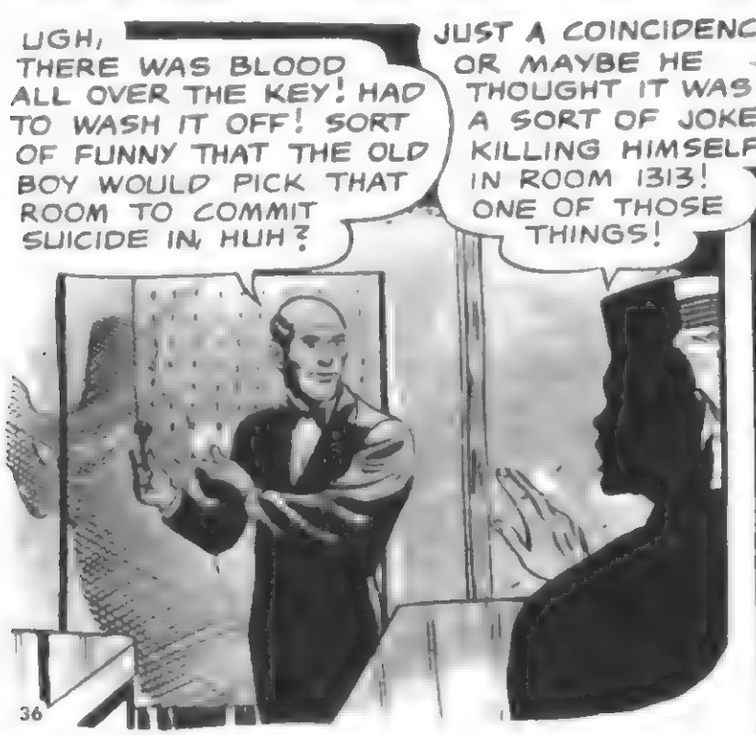


BUT LATER...
GOOD NIGHT, SIR! SURE GLAD YOU'RE NOT FINICKY LIKE SOME FOLKS, JUST BECAUSE THEY DON'T LIKE THE ROOM NUMBER!
HA-HA, I'M NOT IN THE LEAST SUPERSTITIOUS! TO A TIRED TRAVELING SALESMAN, ANY BED LOOKS GOOD! GOOD NIGHT!

BUT ONLY SECONDS LATER...
YAAAAAAAAAA-
FUNNY! I THOUGHT I HEARD SOMETHING! OHHH!

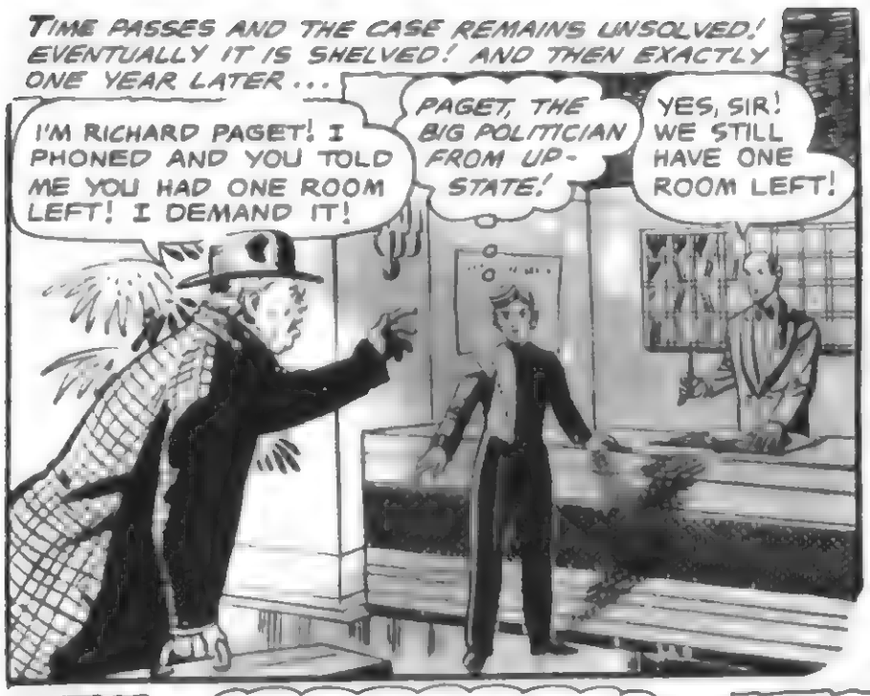
AHEEEEEEEEEEEE-
HA-HA-HA-HOOOOO-HEEEEEE!

HMM—NAME WAS ABNER DURANT! PLENTY OF MONEY IN HIS WALLET! NOTHING TO INDICATE THAT HE WAS HAVING ANY TROUBLE—NO SUICIDE NOTE OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT!
POOR OLD GUY! MAYBE HE WAS SICK!
OR MAYBE HE JUST GOT TIRED OF LIVING!


UGH, THERE WAS BLOOD ALL OVER THE KEY! HAD TO WASH IT OFF! SORT OF FUNNY THAT THE OLD BOY WOULD PICK THAT ROOM TO COMMIT SUICIDE IN, HUH?
JUST A COINCIDENCE! OR MAYBE HE THOUGHT IT WAS A SORT OF JOKE—KILLING HIMSELF IN ROOM 1313! ONE OF THOSE THINGS!

THE CLOCK CREEPS ON, AND IN THE DULL HOURS OF EARLY MORNING...
PLEASE! YOU MUST HAVE A ROOM! I'VE BEEN ON A TRAIN ALL DAY AND NIGHT AND I'M DEAD TIRED! THIS IS MY LAST HOPE!
WELL, WE DO HAVE ONE! B-BUT I THINK I SHOULD TELL YOU, MISS! A MAN COMMITTED SUICIDE IN IT EARLIER TONIGHT!

VERA GRAYSON ALSO IS NOT SUPERSTITIOUS, AND SLEEP IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANYTHING ELSE IN THE WORLD! SO...
GEE, I HOPE I DID RIGHT! BUT AFTER ALL IT'S ONLY A ROOM, AND THE COPS DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT NOT RENTING IT! ANYWAY SHE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE SHE WANTS TO COMMIT SUICIDE! WHAT AM I WORRYING ABOUT?
LATER, ON THE 13th. FLOOR...
GOSH, A DOLLAR TIP! SOME BABE, TOO! GOT PLENTY OF NERVE— I DON'T THINK I'D WANT TO SLEEP IN THAT ROOM TONIGHT, EVEN IF I AIN'T SUPERSTITIOUS!
1313
SUDDENLY...
OHH, NO! PLEASE NO! EEEEEEE—
HA-HA-HA— HOOO-HEE-HEEEEE—
GREAT GUNS! THAT'S THE GIRL SCREAMING! I GOTTA SEE WHAT'S WRONG!
BUT WHEN HE BURSTS INTO THE ROOM IT IS — EMPTY...
MISS GRAYSON! WHERE ARE YOU? HEY, MISS GRAYSON!
B-BUT THERE'S NOBODY HERE! OH, THE WINDOW! OPEN!
GOOD GRIEF! S-SHE DID THE DUTCH, TOO! JUMPED OUT THE WINDOW SAME AS THAT OTHER GUY! BROTHER, THIS IS SURE GONNA BE BAD FOR THE HOTEL!
THIS TIME THE POLICE TAKE MORE INTEREST IN THE CASE! SO UNTIL THE SUN RISES, THE GRILLING GOES ON...
YOU ADMIT IT'S FUNNY, HUH? TWO PEOPLE JUMPING OUT THE SAME WINDOW ON THE SAME NIGHT!
WE'VE BEEN OVER THE JOINT WITH A FINE TOOTH COMB! NOTHING — ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO SHOW FOUL PLAY!
NOT FUNNY! A TERRIBLE COINCIDENCE!
ONE THING— I TELL YA I DID HEAR SOME KIND OF CRAZY LAUGHTER! AWFUL, IT WAS! BUT I KNOW I HEARD IT!
YOU'RE NUTS, KID! YOU IMAGINED IT! YOU SAY YOURSELF THERE WAS NOBODY IN HERE, SO WHO COULD HAVE LAUGHED? UNLESS THE DAME WAS LOONEY, TOO! THAT'S PROBABLY IT!


TIME PASSES AND THE CASE REMAINS UNSOLVED! EVENTUALLY IT IS SHELVED! AND THEN EXACTLY ONE YEAR LATER...
I'M RICHARD PAGET! I PHONED AND YOU TOLD ME YOU HAD ONE ROOM LEFT! I DEMAND IT!
PAGET, THE BIG POLITICIAN FROM UP-STATE!
YES, SIR! WE STILL HAVE ONE ROOM LEFT!

HERE, SIR! HOPE YOU DON'T MIND AN UNLUCKY NUMBER! HA-HA!
CAN'T BE ANY HARM IN IT! BEEN A YEAR SINCE ANYTHING HAPPENED IN THAT ROOM!
I DON'T BELIEVE IN LUCK! A MAN MAKES HIS OWN LUCK! GIMME!
1313

LATER IN ROOM 1313...
I'LL JUST HAVE A LITTLE SNORT AND THEN FOR A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP! GOT TO BE WIDE AWAKE WHEN I SEE THE GOVERNOR TOMORROW ABOUT THAT LITTLE DEAL...

THEN SOMETHING MOVES BEHIND HIM...
WHA... I... WHO ARE...
GAAAAAA-

AND HE WILL NEVER KEEP HIS APPOINTMENT WITH THE GOVERNOR...
HO-HO- HEE-HEE- HA-HA-HEEEEEEE-
EEEEEEE-YIIIIII-

THE POLICE ARE CALLED...
I'M DETECTIVE-SERGEANT STARNES, SON! I REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED IN THIS ROOM JUST A YEAR AGO! I WAS IN UNIFORM THEN! NOW WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME?
GEE, SIR! I DON'T KNOW! EXCEPT THAT I HEART THAT HORRIBLE LAUGHTER AGAIN!

STARNES IS A STUBBORN IRISH COP! HE WORKS OUT A PLAN, AND LATER, THE SAME NIGHT...
WHATEVER IT IS, IT ONLY HAPPENS ONCE A YEAR! I GOTTA WORK FAST! YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO?
Y-YES, SIR! YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE A GUEST! JUST A GUEST! NOBODY TO BOTHER YOU!
LATER, IN THE ROOM...
THERE! GOT THE HANDCUFFS FASTENED TO THE BED! NO WAY I CAN GO OUT THE WINDOW NOW WITHOUT TAKING THE BED WITH ME — AND IT'S TOO BIG! AND NOW I JUST WAIT!
THE DREARY HOURS PASS AND DAWN GROWS NEAR! STILL NOTHING HAPPENS...
THIS AIN'T DOING MY NERVES ANY GOOD! IF SOMETHING IS GOING TO HAPPEN, I WISH IT WOULD HURRY UP AND START! B-BUT WAIT A MINUTE! SEEMS LIKE THE ROOM IS GETTING COLD! D-DEATHLY COLD!
AND WITH THE COLD COMES A TERRIBLE LAUGHTER THAT GROWS AND FILLS THE ROOM...
OHH— MY HEAD! THAT LAUGHTER— TEARING IT APART! W-WHAT IS IT?
HA-HA
HA!
HA-HA
HA!
HA!
SUDDENLY...
HA-HA-HO-HO! YOW-RRRR—
GREAT SCOTT! WHAT A M-MONSTER! BUT I — SO HELPLESS! I FEEL...
HEE-HEE-HEEE-HO-HO-HOOO-YAWRRRRRR!
I—I'VE GOT A TERRIBLE URGE TO JUMP OUT THE WINDOW! I CAN'T STOP IT! I MUST JUMP— I WANT TO JUMP!
AND...
I'LL JUMP! THAT'S WHAT IT WANTS ME TO DO! THE WAY IT KILLED ALL THE OTHERS! YOU WANT TO DO ANYTHING TO GET AWAY FROM IT!
YOUUU-RRR-

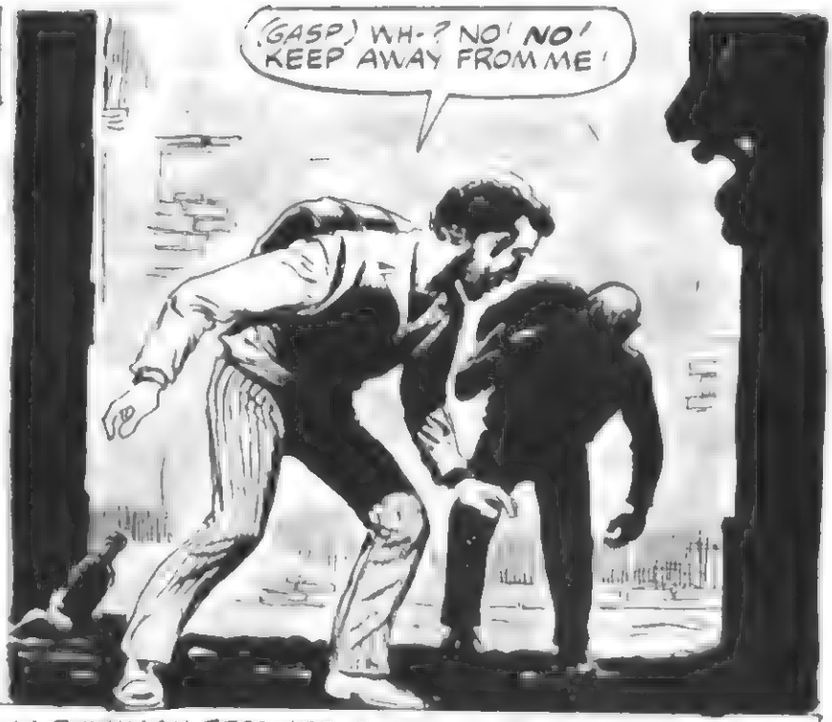
NOW STARNES' CAREFUL PLANS BEGIN TO PAY OFF! AS THE LAUGHTER CEASES AND HE REGAINS HIS SENSES...
H-HEY, DOWN! GOT THE NET RIGGED? I DON'T LIKE IT UP HERE SO HIGH! C'MON, YA LUGS! GET ME OUT OF THIS! SNAP OUTA IT!
GEE, WAS THAT YOU YELLING LIKE THAT?
BE RIGHT UP, SARGE!
AS THE SERGEANT IS HAULED TO SAFETY...
GOT YA, SARGE! SAY, WHAT HAPPENED UP IN THAT ROOM ANYWAY?
NEVER MIND THAT NOW! YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE IT ANYWAY! GET ME OVER THIS LEDGE — BECAUSE WE GOT TO GET BACK UP THERE FAST!
BUT LATER...
NOW C'MON, STARNES! MAKE SENSE! YOU CAN SEE FOR YOURSELF THAT THERE'S NO SIGN OF ANYTHING IN THIS ROOM! YOU MUSTA HAD A BAD DREAM!
NO! I TELL YOU I SAW THAT MONSTER! HE HAUNTS THIS ROOM, MAKES PEOPLE JUMP!
SUDDENLY...
FIRE! HEY, YOU GUYS, GET OUT! THE WHOLE JOINT IS GOING UP!
1313
FIRE! I'LL BET IT'S NO ACCIDENT!
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!
THE FIRE, LIKE A DEMON ITSELF, BURNS WITH A FURY THAT NO WATER CAN SLAKE! AND FROM THE BLAZING HOTEL COMES A TERRIBLE LAUGHTER...
YOU HEAR THAT, MULLIGAN? THAT LAUGHTER, LIKE NOTHING HUMAN! IT'S THAT THING I TELL YOU!
MAYBE YOU DID SEE SOMETHING! BUT WE'LL NEVER KNOW WHAT IT WAS NOW!
FLORIST
HA!
HA!
HA!
HA!
HA!
HA!
The End

THE LIVING DEAD

THE STRANGER WAS TIRED... ALL HE WANTED WAS TO SLEEP! HOW COULD HE KNOW HE WOULD WAKE UP AND MEET...

YEAAA! THE CITY OF THE DEAD... IT'S C-COMING ALIVE!!

I--I CAN'T BE ALL ALONE HERE! HELLO THERE!! HELLO!
(GASP) I AM ALL ALONE! ONLY M-MY ECHO! IT-- IT'S A CITY OF THE DEAD!
HELLO-O-O-O


(GASP) WH-? NO! NO! KEEP AWAY FROM ME!

I--I WARNED YOU...
EEYAHH!

A JUNKMAN BECOMES A GHOUL TO THE CONFUSED HITCH-HIKER...
OHHHH--
YAHH.. NO ONE'S SUPPOSED TO BE HERE; THEY'RE COMING!

LATER...
OHH-- WHERE AM-- TIME? O-OHHH! T-TWELVE O'CLOCK!

AM I SEEING TH-THINGS? THOSE WINDOWS--DOORS-- FLYING OPEN BY THEMSELVES!

YEAH-H! THE CITY OF THE DEAD-- IT'S--IT'S COMING ALIVE!

THEY'LL GET ME, HE SAID! GOT TO R. RUN!

W--? A--A VOICE! A TERRIBLE DEEP VOICE... RUN
RUN... RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!

EVERYTHING--B--BLOWING UP...

SHAKING-- EVERYTHING S-SHAKING--(GASP)... C-CAN'T KEEP MY B-BALANCE--

NO-- NO! PLEASE STOP IT!

I....I'M GOING OUT OF MY MIND! I--RUN...RUN!!

YAWH-- I-I CAN'T STAND IT-- I... AGHHH!

HOW'D THIS GUY GET IN HERE? EVERYBODY LIVING HERE WAS EVICTED MONTHS AGO! AH--HE'S COMING TO!
W...WHA...? I-- NO...LET ME GO! YOU'RE GHOSTS... GHOSTS!!
HE THINKS WE'RE GHOSTS! HE MUST BE NUTS...

GHOSTS... GHOSTS! YOU'LL NEVER GET ME!
WAIT! J-JOE... LOOK! THIS AREA LOOKS AS IF IT WERE BLASTED!
EH? YOU'RE RIGHT! BUT WE WERE SUPPOSED TO BLAST HERE TODAY...WHO COULD HAVE... WHY...

--JOE--I JUST REMEMBERED...THIS HOUSING PROJECT IS ON THE SITE OF AN OLD CEMETERY!
THE END!

CRACK-UP

AS SHOCKING, AS SPINE-CHILLING AS A SIREN IN THE NIGHT IS THIS STORY OF A MURDERED MAN WHO WALKED THE EARTH! HE TOOK VENGEANCE INTO HIS OWN BLOODY HANDS AND USED FEAR AS A WEAPON TO THROTTLE A KILLER! THERE WAS NO ESCAPE FROM THE HORRIBLE REVENGE OF THE MAN WHO WOULDN'T STAY MURDERED...

STAY AWAY! YOU'RE **DEAD!** I'VE KILLED YOU OVER AND OVER!

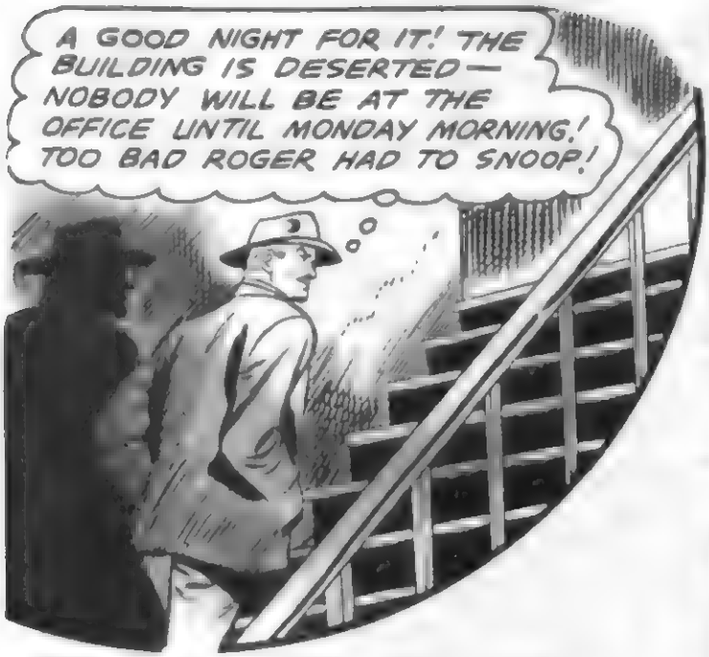
HAH-HAH—THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK, YOU MURDERER!

ROGER SIMON, JUNIOR PARTNER OF DREXEL AND SIMON, WORKS LATE OVER THE BOOKS...

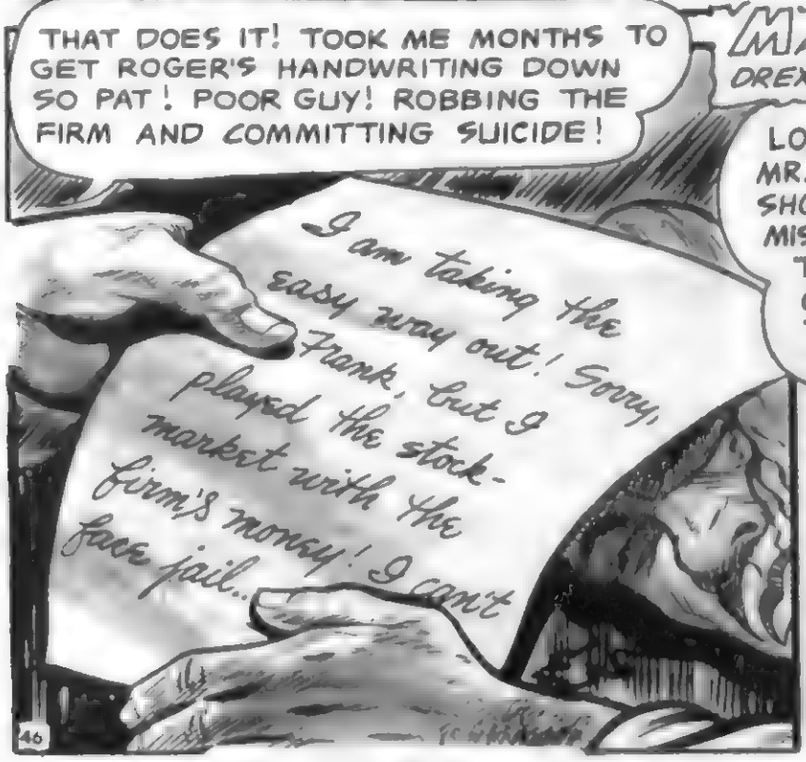
WHAT A MESS! I HOPE FRANK CAN EXPLAIN THIS!

WHILE OUTSIDE MURDER LURKS IN THE SHADOWS..

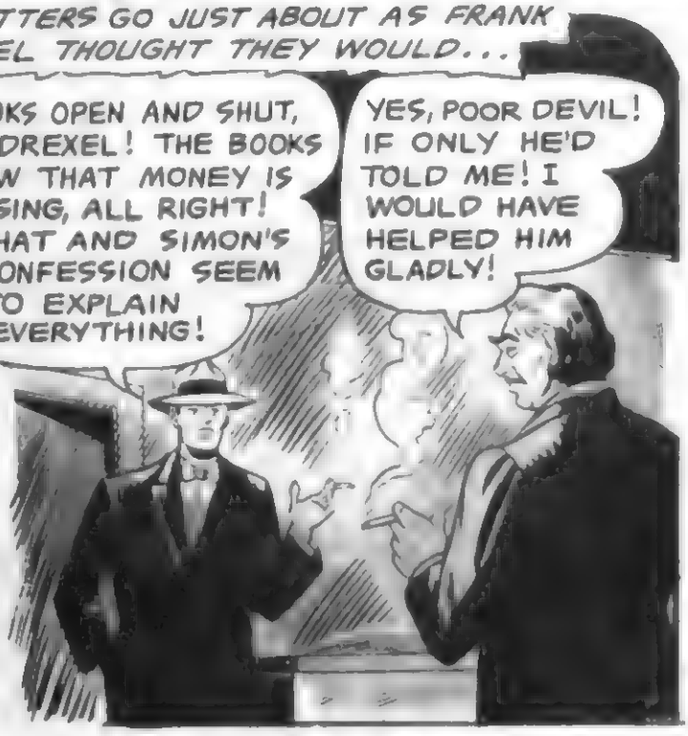
LOOKS LIKE ROGER IS WISE TO ME! HE KNOWS I'VE BEEN STEALING MONEY FROM THE FIRM! I'VE BEEN EXPECTING THIS!



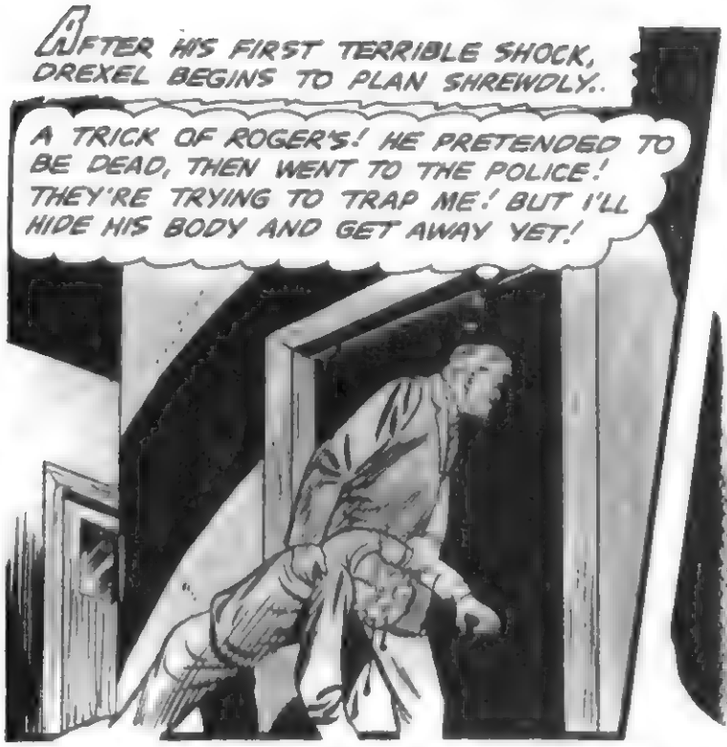
IN THE LAST SECOND OF HIS LIFE, ROGER SIMON HEARS A NOISE, AND...



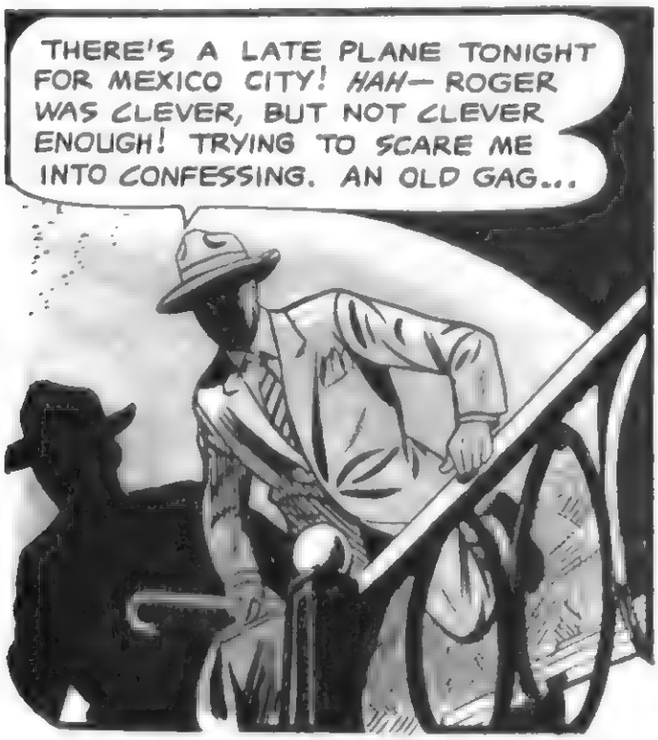
MATTERS GO JUST ABOUT AS FRANK DREXEL THOUGHT THEY WOULD...



FRANK DREXEL SUFFERS NO PANGS OF CONSCIENCE! ONE NIGHT A FEW WEEKS LATER...
GOOD! THE FIRM IS MAKING A LOT OF MONEY SINCE I GOT RID OF ROGER! I'LL BE RICH SOON!
SUDDENLY THERE IS A KNOCKING AT THE DOOR...
HUH! SOMEONE KNOCKING AT THIS HOUR! BUT THE BUILDING IS DESERTED! WELL, COME IN, WHOEVER YOU ARE! DON'T STAND THERE!
THE DOOR SWINGS SLOWLY BACK, AND THERE IS — ROGER SIMON!!!
HELLO, FRANK! FIXING THE BOOKS AGAIN?
HUH! ROGER! NO— YOU'RE DEAD!
AM I, FRANK? I SUPPOSE YOU SHOULD KNOW. YOU KILLED ME, DIDN'T YOU?
IN A FRENZY OF FEAR AND RAGE, DREXEL FIRES AGAIN AND AGAIN AT THE MAN HE HAS ALREADY MURDERED ONCE...
I DON'T UNDERSTAND ANY OF THIS! BUT I KILLED YOU ONCE AND I CAN DO IT AGAIN!
I'LL MAKE A GOOD JOB OF IT THIS TIME! MAYBE YOU'LL STAY DEAD!
AAAAHHHHHHHH— OOHHHH—


AFTER HIS FIRST TERRIBLE SHOCK, DREXEL BEGINS TO PLAN SHREWDLY..
A TRICK OF ROGER'S! HE PRETENDED TO BE DEAD, THEN WENT TO THE POLICE! THEY'RE TRYING TO TRAP ME! BUT I'LL HIDE HIS BODY AND GET AWAY YET!

GOOD THING I'VE BEEN ACCUMULATING CASH! I'LL BE IN MEXICO BEFORE THEY KNOW THAT I'VE REALLY KILLED ROGER THIS TIME!


THERE'S A LATE PLANE TONIGHT FOR MEXICO CITY! HAH— ROGER WAS CLEVER, BUT NOT CLEVER ENOUGH! TRYING TO SCARE ME INTO CONFESSING. AN OLD GAG...

DON'T KNOW THIS PART OF TOWN VERY WELL! I BETTER ASK THIS FELLOW HOW TO GET TO THE AIRPORT!

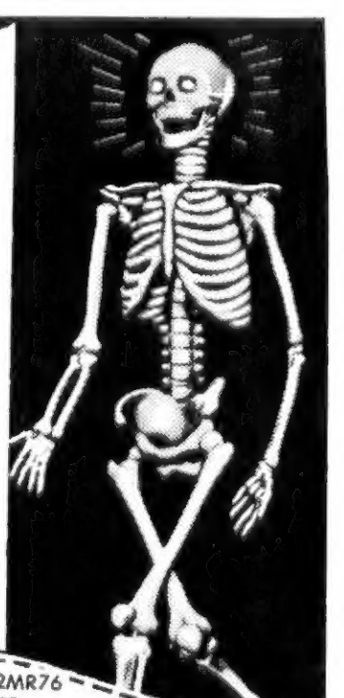
HEY, YOU! HOW DO YOU GET TO THE...
TO THE AIRPORT, FRANK?

LEAVING TOWN, FRANK? WITH THE LOOT, NO DOUBT!
YOU AGAIN! BUT YOU WON'T GET NEAR ME! TAXI! TAXI!

TAKE ME TO THE AIRPORT! HURRY!
SURE! DON'T GET EXCITED, MISTER! YOU'LL GET WHERE YOU'RE GOING!
TAXI
SOON DREXEL NOTICES SOMETHING WRONG!
HEY, DRIVER! THIS ISN'T THE WAY TO THE AIRPORT! I SAID...
I KNOW WHAT YA SAID, MISTER!
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT WANT THE POLICE STATION INSTEAD, FRANK! HOW ABOUT IT?
AHHHHH— YOU!
LET ME OUT! HELP! LEAVE ME ALONE!
COME BACK, FRANK!
TAXI
LATER, IN THE COOL NIGHT AIR, DREXEL REGAINS SOME OF HIS NERVE...
I'VE GOT TO THINK! IT'S A TRICK, I KNOW IT! THEY WANT ME TO CRACK UP! IF ONLY I COULD BE SURE THAT I'M ALL— ALL RIGHT! I KNOW! I'LL GO SEE DOCTOR SAX.
KEEP OFF GRASS
I'VE GOT TO SEE YOU, DOCTOR! IT'S LIFE OR DEATH! NOW, TONIGHT!
WELL, ALL RIGHT! COME TO MY OFFICE IMMEDIATELY.

CONTINUED ON BACK COVER

MONSTER S-I-Z-E MONSTERS



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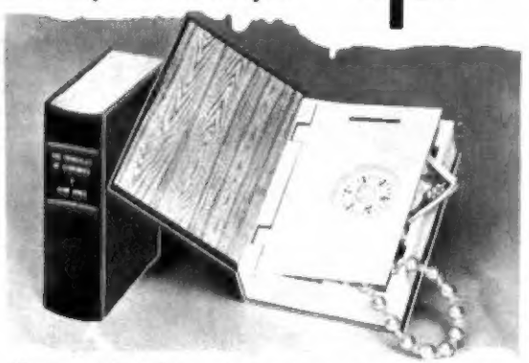

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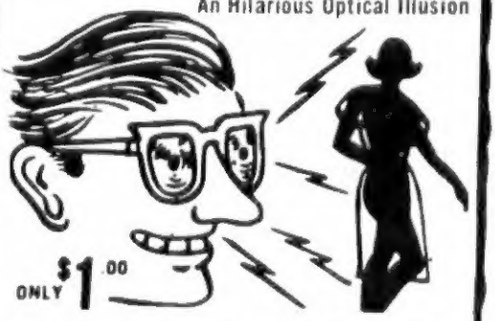

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LATER, AFTER THE POLICE HAVE LOCKED UP A SNIVELING HYSTERICAL KILLER...
I HAND IT TO YOU, BROPHY! THAT TRICK WITH THE MASKS SURE WORKED! BUT THAT LOONY MIGHT HAVE KILLED YOU!
NOT LIKELY WITH THESE NEW PLASTIC, BULLET-PROOF VESTS WE GOT!

AND THESE PLASTIC HELMETS TAKE A TERRIFIC BEATING! IT WAS EASY WITH ALL THOSE GUYS HELPING ME! OF COURSE I COULD HAVE ARRESTED DREXEL RIGHT AWAY, BUT THIS WAY THERE'S NO DOUBT!

WELL, YOU DID IT! IT WAS SMART TO FIGURE HE MIGHT GO TO THE DOC, AND HAVE HIM CALL YOU IN TIME SO YOU COULD GET THERE!
YEAH! WELL, SEE YOU TOMORROW! I WANTA GET TEN HOURS SLEEP AND FORGET THIS CASE!

BUT LATER THAT NIGHT, DETECTIVE BROPHY AWAKES FROM A TROUBLED SLUMBER...
HEY! W—WHO ARE YOU? YOU LOOK JUST LIKE...
YES. I AM ROGER SIMON! RATHER, I'M ALL THAT IS LEFT OF HIM! A GHOST!

I WANTED TO THANK YOU, DETECTIVE BROPHY! FOR CATCHING MY MURDERER SO CLEVERLY! I WAS AFRAID THAT HE WOULD GET AWAY WITH IT. AND NOW— GOODBYE...

I'LL BE.....! YOU NEVER KNOW IN THIS WORLD! JUST THE SAME I'M NOT SAYING ANYTHING ABOUT THIS AT THE PRECINCT! THEY'D PUT ME RIGHT IN WITH DREXEL!
The End